

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claim 3 and amend claims 1 and 4 so that the claims hereafter read as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A device for grasping and carrying thin cord-like objects comprising:

a hollow, substantially rigid shaft having a proximal end and a distal end, ~~said the~~ distal end being pointed and adapted to pierce soft tissue, and a lumen extending from ~~said the~~ proximal end to ~~said the~~ distal end of said shaft;

a solid rod having a proximal end and a distal end, said rod being positioned in ~~said the~~ lumen in reciprocally sliding relationship therewith;

first and second wire-like elements each having a distal end and a proximal end, said first and second wire-like elements being attached at their respective proximal ends to ~~said the~~ distal end of said rod so as to extend distally therefrom and move in conjunction with said rod, said first wire-like element defining a hook-shaped configuration at ~~its the~~ distal end thereof, ~~said second wire-like element defining a guide means at its distal end, and said distal ends of said first and second wire-like elements being spring biased away from one another; and~~

~~activation~~ actuation means attached to ~~said the~~ proximal end of said rod and to ~~said the~~ proximal end of said shaft for moving said rod and said wire-like elements between: (i) a first position wherein ~~said the~~ distal ends of said wire-like elements are contained within said shaft in closely spaced relation to one another, and (ii) a second position wherein ~~said the~~ distal ends of said wire-like elements extend outwardly from ~~said the~~ distal

end of said shaft in flared relationship to one another, wherein
said actuation means comprises:

a housing attached to the proximal end of said shaft;
a trigger pivotally attached to said housing; and
a spring biased piston attached to the proximal end of
said rod and configured to slide within said housing so as to
move said rod between the first and second positions;

~~wherein said first wire-like element comprises a proximal~~
~~segment and a distal segment defining the hook-shaped~~
~~configuration and said second wire-like element comprises a~~
~~proximal segment and a distal segment, said second wire-like~~
~~element distal segment defining the guide means, and when said~~
~~wire-like elements are in the second position said first wire-~~
~~like element distal segment extends in a direction toward said~~
~~second wire-like element distal segment and substantially normal~~
~~to said second wire-like element distal segment;~~

said first and second wire-like elements being adapted so
that when said wire-like elements are in ~~said~~ the second
position, ~~said the distal ends of said first wire-like element~~
~~distal segment~~ and said ~~guide means~~ second wire-like element
cooperate to define a gap therebetween for receiving and trapping
~~said the~~ thin cord-like object, and ~~further~~ wherein ~~said the~~
distal end of said first wire-like element ~~guide means serve to~~
guide grasps said the thin cord-like object and carries the thin
cord-like object back toward and into the distal end of said
shaft into engagement with said hook-shaped distal end of said
~~first wire-like element~~ when said wire-like elements are moved
from ~~said the~~ second position to ~~said the~~ first position;

whereby said wire-like elements are further adapted to
secure ~~said the~~ thin cord-like object to said shaft when said
wire-like elements are moved from ~~said the~~ second position to

~~said~~ the first position and release the thin cord-like object
when said wire-like elements are moved from the first position to
the second position.

2. (Original) A device according to claim 1 wherein said distal end of said shaft is curved.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Currently Amended) A method for grasping and carrying
a thin cord-like object comprising:

(1) providing a device comprising:

a hollow, substantially rigid shaft having a proximal end and a distal end, ~~said~~ the distal end being pointed and adapted to pierce soft tissue, and a lumen extending from ~~said~~ the proximal end to said the distal end of said shaft;

a solid rod having a proximal end and a distal end, said rod being positioned in ~~said~~ the lumen in reciprocally sliding relationship therewith;

first and second wire-like elements each having a distal end and a proximal end, said first and second wire-like elements being attached at their respective proximal ends to ~~said~~ the distal end of said rod so as to extend distally therefrom and move in conjunction with said rod, said first wire-like element defining a hook-shaped configuration at ~~its~~ the distal end thereof, ~~said second wire-like element defining a guide means at its distal end, and said distal ends of said first and second wire-like elements being spring biased away from one another; and~~

~~activation~~ actuation means attached to ~~said~~ the proximal end of said rod and to ~~said~~ the proximal end of said shaft for moving said rod and said wire-like elements between (i)

a first position wherein ~~said~~ the distal ends of said wire-like elements are contained within said shaft in closely spaced relation to another, and (ii) a second position wherein ~~said~~ the distal ends of said wire-like elements extend outwardly from ~~said~~ the distal end of said shaft in flared relationship to one another, wherein the actuation means comprises:

a housing attached to the proximal end of said shaft;

a trigger pivotally attached to said housing; and
a spring biased piston attached to the proximal end of said rod and configured to slide within said housing so as to move said rod between the first and second positions;

~~wherein said first wire-like element comprises a proximal segment and a distal segment defining the hook-shaped configuration and said second wire-like element comprises a proximal segment and a distal segment, said second wire-like element distal segment defining the guide means, and when said wire-like elements are in the second position said first wire-like element distal segment extends in a direction toward said second wire-like element distal segment and substantially normal to said second wire-like element distal segment;~~

~~said first and second wire-like elements being adapted so that when said wire-like elements are in said second position, said first wire-like element distal segment and said guide means cooperate to define a gap therebetween for receiving said thin cord-like object, and further wherein said guide means serve to guide said thin cord-like object into engagement with said hook-shaped distal end of said first wire-like element when said wire-like elements are moved from said second position to said first position;~~

~~whereby said first wire-like elements are adapted to secure said thin cord-like object to said shaft when said wire-like elements are moved from said second position to said first position;~~

(2) positioning said rod and said wire-like elements in ~~said~~ the first position;

(3) forcing the distal end of said shaft through the soft tissue and maneuvering ~~said the~~ the distal end of said shaft so that it is adjacent to the thin cord-like object which is to be grasped;

(4) positioning said rod and said wire-like ~~members~~ elements in ~~said the~~ the second position by activating said trigger of the actuation means, and maneuvering ~~said the~~ the distal end of said shaft as needed so as to position said the flared distal ends of said wire-like elements on opposite sides of said the cord-like object so as to define a gap therebetween for receiving and trapping the thin cord-like object; and

(5) thereafter positioning said rod and said wire-like elements in ~~said the~~ the first position by releasing the trigger of the actuation means, whereby ~~said the distal end of said first wire-like element guide means guide grasps said the~~ thin cord-like object into engagement with said distal end of said first wire-like element and said first wire-like element grapples said cord-like object and carries the thin cord-like object back toward and into the distal end of said shaft as said wire-like elements are moved from the second position to the first position, whereby the wire-like elements are adapted to secure the thin cord-like object attaches it to said distal end of said to said shaft when said wire-like elements are moved from the second position to the first position and release the thin cord-

like object when said wire-like elements are moved from the first position to the second position; and

(6) repeating steps (2) through (5) so as to further maneuver the distal end of said shaft to grasp the thin cord-like object and pass it through the soft tissue.